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ABSTRACT

This document relates the basic notion of accountability to the preparation and supervision of teachers within the limits of accountability. The paper discusses the following questions: a) What competencies are the responsibility of preservice and in-service education? b) What is the role of supervision in teacher accountability? Of the individual? c) What is the role of laboratory/field experiences in the preparation of a teacher? d) What is the nature of the internship as it is affected by the accountability movement? and e) How can a candidate for teaching be adequately prepared to carry on a continuous program of self-improvement through his career? These and similar questions are discussed in the light of the current pressure for accountability. (Author/JA)

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PREPARING TEACHERS IN THE AGE OF ACCOUNTABILITY

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To hold the public school accountable for outcomes that are contingent on variables over which it has little or no control is unreasonable. On the contrary, each and every member of society is responsible to some degree for the successes and failures of our schools and, therefore, each is reciprocally accountable to the other(s).

Colleges and professors of education are certainly not exempt from being held accountable. The purpose of this paper is to consider several implications that are raised when we who are in the teacher education business ask ourselves the question, "How and for what are we accountable?"

At the risk of oversimplification, a single, comprehensive response to this question might be that we who are in teacher education are really accountable for how effectively we are able to translate and make use of what we know at a given time about learners and how learners learn and about teachers and how teachers teach. Couched in slightly different terms, in the final analysis, it may not be so much a matter of precisely what and how much we know about learning and teaching as it is how well we put this knowledge to practical use.

Perhaps this notion can be more clearly demonstrated when illustrated by several suggestions for maximizing our future efforts in the "Age of Accountability."

SUGGESTIONS FOR MAXIMIZING OUR EFFORTS

The outcomes of public education, for which it is to be held accountable, must be identified and described clearly in terms that can be measured. Until this problem is resolved, we will likely continue to dissipate much of our power and energy. In the absence of realistic, clearly

defined goals, the public school will probably remain unable to mobilize itself to bring full power to bear in those areas of learning where it can have greatest impact on students and society in general. To modify slightly an earlier statement, it could very well be that we already possess sufficient knowledge concerning the mechanics of both learning and teaching to improve significantly our results in schools today, if we could but identify and concentrate our efforts on those specific areas of learning over which the schools have reasonable control and, therefore, reasonable chances for success. This contention is supported by a speculation that today's school is probably meeting with greater success in teaching children to read (which is basically a cognitive skill) than it is in teaching children to be honest (which is essentially an affective learning). Once again the overriding issue here is whether or not the school should be accountable for fostering learnings which fall in the areas of values, attitudes, and the like when it exercises so little influence over the early, formative development of the child prior to his entering school.

Speculations and observations of this sort naturally lead us to consider the extent to which the parent is accountable first to his child and, in turn, to the school.

The operational definition of teacher education should be broadened to include provisions for training parents as teachers. A suggestion of this sort is prompted by an obvious need for better control over the kind and quality of child that comes to school. Few will argue but what the first five years of a child's life are perhaps the most crucial with respect to his further development in the areas of a value system, attitudes, basic psychomotor potential, etc. Yet, the irony of the situation as far as the

accountability issue is concerned is that, as of now, the school has almost no direct influence on the development of the young child in such matters. The child is almost entirely under the influence of the parent during these most crucial years prior to entering school. With this inevitability in mind, we should take immediate and definite steps to make parents acutely aware of their awesome responsibility and to prepare them properly to assume it with resolve and commitment and ultimate success. It is not beyond the realm of reality to assume that parents can be prepared to work effectively with their own young children in the home. Essentially, this would entail translating what is already known about the young child and how he learns in terms that can be understood and put to use by parents. With proper modification, such an assignment could quite adequately be handled by teacher education programs that are already established and underway. Certainly, even the most modest gains that could be effected in the improvement of the intellectual, affective, and psychomotor development of a child as a result of such efforts would indeed pay off handsomely in dividends later on when he enters and passes on through the public school program.

To summarize this point, the present facilities and potential resources of our existing teacher education operations should be modified appropriately in order to be made readily available to parents so that they can be prepared to be effective teachers of their young children, in their own home, during the first, crucial years of life.

Programs for the preparation of teachers should be modified so that they are conducted almost entirely within the public school setting. Assuming that we can agree and establish the outcomes of education for which

the public schools are to be accountable and these in clearly stated terms that can be measured, the task of identifying and spelling out the skills and competencies of teachers that are required in order to realize the established outcomes is greatly facilitated. Moreover, once identified and described, the skills and competencies necessary for effective teaching will essentially be the same for beginning as well as for experienced teachers. No longer will there be the need to make a distinction between the requirements for preservice and inservice teachers. Instead, we can think in terms of "beginning" and "experienced" inservice teachers. This should result in the role of the professor being more clearly defined. Now it will be possible for him to work with groups of teachers who are working toward mastery of common skills and competencies, but at different stages of experience and development.

In most instances, teacher training experiences of this sort are better suited to on-the-job conditions than they are to the microteaching or microsimulation-type experiences that are now commonly provided on college campuses. In programs of this type, the beginning teacher education student can be placed off campus immediately where, from the start, he can be an integral and active participant in the ongoing public school program. And perhaps of equal import, the professor by necessity will be involved in the school setting where teaching and learning are taking place and where related problems arise and can be studied.

Teachers should be able to assess their own teaching behavior in order that they can be accountable to themselves. It is open to debate as to just how helpful outside criticism of a teacher's teaching effectiveness is to that teacher. Even under the most relaxed circumstances, analysis

and criticism of another tends to produce a certain amount of threat and/or negative feeling. Furthermore, an outside observer can only be present occasionally to observe and then for short periods of time. However, the teacher is at the center of the learning situation, making decisions nearly all of the time. Therefore, in the final analysis the success or failure of the whole educational undertaking is ultimately dependent upon the integrity and competence of the individual teacher.

When a teacher is clearly aware of what he is expected to do and when he is properly equipped to monitor and measure his own teaching behavior, he is then in an excellent position to assess and evaluate his own teaching effectiveness along with his own progress. It seems to turn out that, as a teacher becomes more competent, he tends to gain confidence. And as confidence grows, so does competence to where the two conditions seem to stimulate and promote each other in a kind of cycle. The teacher finds himself in what might be termed a "competence-confidence syndrome."

IN SUMMARY:

1. Colleges and professors of education have certain obligations to the public schools and for these they should be held accountable.

2. We must translate and put to best use possible what we currently know about learners and how they learn and about teachers and how they teach.

3. Teacher education programs should modify their bases and modes of operation to provide training experiences for parents of young children. Any gains to be realized by parents working with their own children, in the home, during the first five years of life will pay off greatly later on in school.

4. Teacher education programs should be modified such that most of their experiences are conducted within the public school setting, making maximum use of its facilities as well as its teaching and administrative staff.

5. In the final analysis, the success or failure of the educational program is dependent on the integrity and competence of the individual, classroom teacher. Therefore, he must be placed in a position where he can be accountable to himself.